

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 004176

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/09/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#) [XL](#)

SUBJECT: FALLUJAH: LEADERS MEET WITH IECI COMMISSIONER,
WELCOME VISIT BUT ALSO RAISE CONCERNS

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT S. FORD,
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: Fallujah city leaders met with IECI Chairman, Izadin Shufiq, UN IFES elections expert Philip Sfocina, and an Embassy/USAID delegation October 6, 2005, at the Fallujah Civil-Military Operations Center (CMOC). Residents criticized the number of seats (nine) the Transitional National Assembly (TNA) had allocated for Anbar in the December 15 election, claiming it did not reflect the true size of the province's electorate. They welcomed the IECI's agreement to allow polling site security in Fallujah proper to be overseen by tribes, with imams' support. Commissioner Izadin stated flatly that the IECI had opposed the TNA's initial decision, since reversed, to define two-thirds of registered voters (vice those who show-up polling day) as the necessary threshold in three provinces to veto the constitution. The commissioner informed the gathered leaders that detainees would be allowed to vote, and that he had discussed ITG and CF military operations in the Euphrates River Valley with PM Jafari. Izadin agreed that the presence of media in the city on Referendum day would be key to counter Zargawi and insurgent propaganda given the projected high turnout. Fallujans expressed appreciation for the visit and predicted that the city would vote in large numbers. END SUMMARY.

IECI: WE WANT SUNNIS TO PARTICIPATE

2. (C) IECI Chairman Izadin stressed to gathered Fallujans (tribal leaders, reconstruction committee chairman, city council members, among others) October 6, 2005, at the CMOC that the commission wanted to ensure broad Sunni-Arab participation in the October 15 referendum and December election. Security at polling sites is a top priority; he noted that Fallujah's security arrangements would be an exception: tribes would be given a role and site workers would be recruited locally. Izadin informed Fallujans that Al Anbar had been allocated nine seats for the December election. He criticized the recent TNA decision that would have significantly raised the bar in provinces for the two-thirds requirement to veto the constitution -- a change that the IECI had vigorously opposed.

3. (C) Izadin confirmed that detainees would be allowed to vote, although exact mechanics were still being worked out. The IECI recognized Sunni-Arab concerns about ongoing ITG/CF military operations in the Euphrates River Valley, a subject he said he had discussed directly with Prime Minister Jafari.

FALLUJANS: WE ARE READY; FEW
CONSTITUTION TEXTS; NEED MORE SEATS

4. (C) Tribal leaders noted that Fallujah was mobilized to participate in the referendum. City leaders had long urged residents to vote. They welcomed news that detainees would be allowed participate as well. One tribal leader, Sheikh Mohammed, criticized ongoing U.S. military operations in Anbar, claiming that in some cities "only ten percent" of the population remained. He asked how could the people there vote.

5. (C) Several Fallujah leaders deplored that few constitutions had been circulated to residents and that most area Sunni-Arabs had not read it. They warned that consequently people would rely on the guidance of religious leaders because they were unable to judge the document on its merits.

6. (C) Residents flagged concerns over the number of parliamentary seats that had been allocated to Al Anbar province. Engineer Farouk noted that Najaf had fewer residents than Anbar, but would be granted almost the same number of seats (nine for Anbar, eight

for Najaf). He stated, "We respect the holy city of An-Najaf, but they have eight seats. With all due respect to them, and I respect them greatly, we are huge. An-Najaf is one of our great cities, but Anbar is much, much larger." Izadin replied that "science" had been used by the TNA to determine the allocation of seats, using the public distribution (food ration) data.

ISF VOTE?

17. (C) A Fallujah-based Public Order Brigade (POB) general, Brigadier General Kareem, questioned the mechanics for ISF voting on Referendum Day. (NOTE: There are approximately 5,000 ISF in Fallujah, a majority of whom are Sh'ia. END NOTE.) Izadin replied that "separate envelopes" would be available at each polling site for the military and police (e.g. if from Basra, there would be a Basra envelope, which would then be sent back to the respective provinces for counting). BG Kareem said some of his men lacked identification; Izadin promised he'd go back to the MOD and MOI to help work out a solution. The Marine regimental commander in Fallujah, Colonel Berger, stressed the importance of resolving the issue, remarking: ISF "are citizens, too" and must be given the right to vote.

MEDIA KEY TO COUNTERING AMZ ET AL.

18. (C) In a separate meeting with the Marine regimental commander (who oversees security in the city), Marine Foreign Area Officer, Fallujah Poloff, and USAID/Embassy delegation, Izadin reinforced IECI commitment to a credible electoral process. He noted that the Coalition would play a key role in transporting ballots. Izadin clarified that media should be encouraged to cover voting in Fallujah; the only IECI restriction related to coverage inside actual polling sites (not allowed). Poloff stressed that Fallujah, Zargawi's old headquarters, would likely turnout in the tens of thousands on referendum day. These images would forcefully counter AMZ propaganda -- showing that Fallujah's Sunni Arabs, in Iraq's city of mosques no less -- were not intimidated and had decided to vote in large numbers.

19. (C) Izadin agreed. He stated that Fallujah's turnout "would be a strike against Zargawi. Fallujah was his headquarters, and he will see that everyone is willing to participate in the political process. They will be following the democratic way and standing against violence." (NOTE: We anticipate some media presence in Fallujah on referendum day, in line with security provisions and resource constraints. END NOTE.)

COMMENT

110. (C) This visit was put together through the coordination of the Embassy, MNF-I, IIMEF and the Fallujah SET. Fallujans welcomed the IECI commissioner's visit, and we will work to ensure that the visit is the start, and not the end-point, of outreach in the city. Izadin was an adept presenter of IECI positions. Questions put to the commissioner largely reflected Sunni-Arab paranoia regarding ITG machinations and anxiety about ongoing military operations in Anbar. In Fallujah, ISF relations with residents are marked largely by friction and mistrust. More IECI clarity regarding ISF voting is needed to ensure that all votes are counted in a credible fashion.
Khalilzad